

Handala

Handala (Arabic: حنظلة, romanized: *Ḥanẓala*), also **Handhala**, **Hanzala** or **Hanthala**, is a prominent national symbol and personification of the Palestinian people.^{[1][2]}

The character was created in 1969 by political cartoonist **Naji al-Ali**, and first took its current form in 1973. Handala became the signature of Naji al-Ali's cartoons and remains an iconic symbol of Palestinian identity and defiance. The character has been described as "portraying war, resistance, and the Palestinian identity with astounding clarity".^[3]

The name comes from the Arabic word for the **colocynth** (Arabic: حنظل, romanized: *ḥanẓal*), a perennial plant native to the Levant which bears bitter fruit, grows back when cut, and has deep roots.^[4]

Handala's impact has continued in the decades after al-Ali's 1987 assassination; today the character remains widely popular as a representative of the **Palestinian people**, and is found on numerous walls and buildings throughout the **West Bank** (notably as **West Bank Wall graffiti art**), **Gaza** and other **Palestinian refugee camps**, and as a popular tattoo and jewellery motif. It has also been used by movements such as **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** and the **Iranian Green Movement**.^[4]

Early publication

Handala appeared for the first time in *Al-Seyassah* in **Kuwait** on 13 July 1969,^[1] and first turned his back to the viewer and clasped his hands behind his back from 1973 onwards.^[5]

Symbolism

Handala's age – ten years old – represents **Naji al-Ali**'s age in 1948 when he was forced to leave Palestine; Handala will not grow up until he can return to his homeland:^[6] Al-Ali wrote that:

Handala was born 10 years old and he will always be 10 years old. It was at that age that I left my homeland. When Handala returns, he will still be 10 years old, and then he will start growing up.

His posture, with his turned back and clasped hands, symbolises the character's "rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way" and as "a symbol of rejection of all

the present negative tides in our region."^[4] His ragged clothes and standing barefoot symbolise his allegiance to the poor.^[4] Al-Ali described Handala as "the symbol of a just cause":

He was the arrow of the compass, pointing steadily towards Palestine. Not just Palestine in geographical terms, but Palestine in its humanitarian sense—the symbol of a just cause, whether it is located in Egypt, Vietnam or South Africa.^[6]

Legacy



West Bank Wall graffiti art in Bethlehem: Handala and Liberty as "Pietà"

Al-Ali stated in an interview prior to his assassination that: "Handala, whom I created, will not end after I die. I hope that this is not an

Handala	
Handala, the Palestinian defiance symbol	
First appearance	' Al-Seyassah ' <div>13 July 1969</div>
Last appearance	1987
Created by	Naji al-Ali
In-universe information	
Full name	حنظلة
Gender	Male
Occupation	10 year old child
Affiliation	Justice, steadfastness (see sumud), poverty
Origin	Palestinian refugee
Nationality	Palestinian

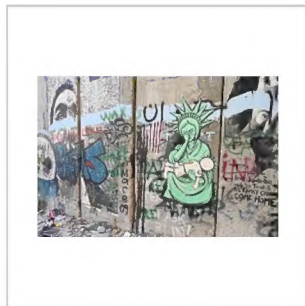
exaggeration when I say that I will continue to live in Handala, even after I die". Current usages of the Handala motif include:

- [Graffiti](#) on numerous walls, buildings and souvenir shops throughout the [West Bank](#) (notably [West Bank Wall graffiti art](#)), [Gaza](#) and other [Palestinian refugee camps](#)^[4]
- A primary symbol of the [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) movement^[4]
- A popular tattoo and jewellery motif^[4]
- The web mascot of the [Iranian Green Movement](#)^[7]
- In Israeli artwork, particular alongside the Israeli character [Srulik](#)^[8]
- The ship used in the [July 2025 Gaza Freedom Flotilla](#) which challenged the [Israeli naval blockade of Gaza](#) was named after it.

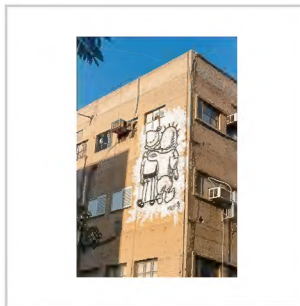
Gallery



Near [Bethlehem](#)



Near [Bethlehem](#)



The Peace Kids mural,
with [Srulik](#) in
[Florentin, Tel Aviv](#)

See also

- [Culture of Palestine](#)
- [List of national symbols of Palestine](#)

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